



“What is the blaspheme against the Holy Spirit?”

This is a question that came up in a recent Sunday Morning study. It refers to the warning Jesus gave the Pharisees about the sin against the Holy Spirit in Mark 3:28-30 (also recorded in Matthew 12:31-37 and Luke 12:12).

“Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin” — for they were saying, “He has an unclean spirit.”

The Pharisees’ had accused Jesus of using satanic powers to heal a man who had been rendered mute by demons. Jesus first responded to their accusation by showing them the absurdity of their claim. He pointed out that if He were using Satan’s power to cast out demons, then Satan would be fighting against himself. It was after exposing the foolishness of their accusation, that Jesus issued the warning listed above.

In all three Gospel accounts the term “blaspheme” is used to describe this sin against the Holy Spirit. Blaspheme means “to defame, seriously insult or slander” someone. The Jews would later bring this charge against Jesus, claiming that He was defaming or slandering God by claiming to actually be God.

Bible scholars have debated for 2000 years about the exact nature of this “unforgivable sin,” so I won’t claim to have the definitive answer. But, for me, something I mentioned about the Holy Spirit in the sermon on Pentecost Sunday seems to point us to the answer: “The Holy Spirit’s main purpose is ‘Faith in Jesus.’”

The Spirit works to...

- 1) Create faith in Jesus,
- 2) Strengthen and Preserve faith in Jesus once it is created
- 3) Empower us to live out our faith in Jesus in our actions
- 4) Empower us to share our faith in Jesus through our words.

The Spirit is “all about” faith in Jesus.

Given that truth about the Spirit, it would seem natural that the sin against the Holy Spirit would be rejecting the Spirit’s work of faith in Jesus.

At the very end of Mark’s gospel (16:16) we read, “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.” It would appear that the best definition of the sin against the Holy Spirit would be this “unbelief” that condemns. Unbelief that Jesus is truly the Son of God and our only Savior from sin and only hope for eternal life.

I’ll end by sharing what I consider the best comment I’ve ever heard about this “blaspheme against the Holy Spirit,”: “If you are worried about having committed this sin, you can be sure that you haven’t.”

Thanks for asking,
Pastor David

Send your questions to pastor@livingwordlutheran.net